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3. The Pelavin report discusses problems APHB encountered in implementing their Central Automated Resource List, including difficulty in getting States to subscribe, and system design flaws. Describe the status of CARL's operations.

Answer:

BACKGROUND

Identifying and locating textbooks in alternate media required by students who are visually impaired has long been a difficult challenge. Efforts to make this information available using new technology led to the computerization of the Central Catalog which is now known as the Central Automated Resource List (APH-CARL).

APH-CARL was developed, beginning in 1986, by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in conjunction with an ad hoc committee of professionals in the field of vision for the purpose of giving professionals, volunteers, parents, and students immediate access to a wide range of information about educational materials for students who are visually impaired. APH-CARL contains more than 26,000 titles available in braille, large type, or recorded form. The data is accessed by personal computer using a telecommunications modem. Current on-line users of APH-CARL include schools for the blind, state departments of educations, local school systems, instructional materials centers for the visually impaired, colleges, libraries, and transcribing agencies.

RESPONSE

APH has been acutely and proactively concerned about flaws and uncompleted features in the original design of APH-CARL. These problems were further complicated by difficulties resulting from the sale of the original contracting agency to GTEES. APH has acted assertively and effectively to complete, correct, and extensively refine the entire system and to respond to the concerns and needs of the field.

In 1989, at the time the Pelavin study was being conducted, APH-CARL had 49 users. 33 states were represented in this user population. Depending on user needs, the annual fees could be as high as $1095.00; the on-line charges at this time were $20.00/hour. APH re-evaluated these costs in 1989 and decided they were too high to encourage new users to join the system. Because of our commitment to providing this essential service, APH made the decision to absorb the cost overruns of the system. In 1989, an interim step in the price reduction was made. APH eliminated the annual subscription fee, and reduced the price to a $100 one time set-up fee with a $30.00 per hour on-line charge. A second price reduction in 1990 resulted in the current $25.00 set-up fee and $30.00/hour on-line charge. Now, in 1992, there are 65 APH-CARL

users with 45 states represented. Additionally, APH committed itself to a redesign of the system in order to provide expanded and refined services.

To this date, APH-CARL is housed on a Hewlett Packard 3000. Presently, through access to APH-CARL, users can:
-- search for sources of alternate media textbooks
-- enter new titles they will be transcribing into an alternate media
-- review inventory from APH and other suppliers
-- check prices for APH materials
-- order APH materials (at times over 20% of orders placed in a month are entered on APH-CARL)
-- review purchase orders
-- review order status and backorders
-- review credit limits, current balances, and the cost of orders not yet shipped
-- review reasons for rejected orders

In keeping with the goals of the Coalition for Information Access for Print Handicapped Readers (CIAPHR) and the National Education Goals, we feel it is imperative that we expand this database to include not just textbooks but all books available in alternate media on a national level. Having such a complete database will provide easy access for any print handicapped reader to locate necessary materials for educational equity and literacy. The expansion of APH-CARL to be a North American comprehensive listing system would empower persons who are visually impaired to move closer to achieving the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and be prepared for the responsibilities of citizenship, as stated in the National Education Goals.

Reviewing the initial APH-CARL proposal and the internal needs of APH, it was determined that APH required a new mainframe computer and operating system. The new system will accommodate the APH-CARL database as it expands into the comprehensive North American database.

Components of the plan which will expand APH-CARL into the proposed national comprehensive listing include:

-- Expansion of existing system, including implementation of a new mainframe and operating system which will enable us to expand capabilities as the amount of data increases

-- Integration of APH-CARL into the new APH mainframe

-- Identification or designing of software that is user-friendly and will also make the database speech accessible

-- Conversion of existing data in APH-CARL to Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) format in order for all records to be consistent with bibliographic cataloging standards

-- Writing of conversion programs to allow the comprehensive database to accept data reported to APH by other agencies that do not report transcriptions and recordings in MARC format

-- Hiring of a cataloger familiar with computerized bibliographic records and MARC cataloging to match and enter the complete bibliographic information on each new title entered into this comprehensive database

-- Loading data now maintained by three additional major agencies (NLS, RFB, and Canadian National Library) into this consolidated database (all data to be entered in MARC format)

-- Maintain APH-CARL through the testing phase of the comprehensive database

-- Provide training on the new comprehensive system for existing APH-CARL users (including increasing user efficiency for on-line time)

-- Advertise the new system to target audiences identified by the advisory committee

-- Increase the systems ability to produce various report features

The redesigned system will give the user:

-- Better response time due to improved searching techniques

-- Choice of search methods and format

-- Access to larger amounts of standardized data

-- Choice of access path

-- Improved customer support and training

-- Lower occurrences of non-connects

-- Compatibility with speech synthesis

-- Accessibility to data without using PC computers

-- International accessibility

-- Accessibility to the APH catalog information on-line

-- Access to books (not only textbooks) and materials in alternate media

Steps have been taken toward this re-design. These include:

-- securing cooperative agreements from participating agencies

-- obtaining recommendations from users, external and internal, for new system design

-- hiring a cataloger/librarian

-- implementation of a new mainframe and operating system

-- writing a systems methodology including requirements for the new system software

-- beginning the conversion of APH-CARL data to MARC format

Notes, MISC>>>>>

Also during 1989, at the time of the Pelavin study, APH was in the process of extensive revisions and refinements to the APH-CARL database. APH acted .....the original design, which was incomplete due to difficulties resulting from the sale of the original contracting agency, .

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